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Cabinet to reduce toll rate increase of 2 highways

Hamisah Hamid

THE Cabinet yesterday agreed in principle to reduce the rate of toll increase at the Seremban-Port Dickson and Kulim-Butterworth highways.

Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said new quantum of increase will be announced next Wednesday after the ministry presented a working paper on that matter at the Cabinet meeting.

"I have been asked to submit a working paper next week on the ministry's recommendations where the Cabinet will consider all the problems and the extra compensation that the Government has to pay (to the concessionaire) before giving its approval," he told reporters after the visit by members of Cabinet to Petronas Twin Tower in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The three-hour visit to the tallest building in the world was led Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Also present were Petronas chairman Tan Sri Azizan Zainal Abidin and Petronas president Tan Sri Hassan Merican.

Samy Vellu said if the Cabinet approves the new toll rates at its next meeting, the rates will be enforced within two weeks' time as the new rates have to be gazetted first.

The ministry had earlier this month announced a RM2.60 toll for using the Seremban-Port Dickson Highway, an increase of 50 sen over the previous rate.

Users of the Butterworth-Kulim Expressway meanwhile are paying a total of RM2.10 comprising RM1.10 at the Butterworth Plaza and another RM1 at the Kulim Plaza.

Samy Vellu said the ministry will suggest a reasonable rate that can be accepted by the rakyat but this would involve compensation which the Government has to pay to concessionaires of both highways.

He said the Government has paid RM1.2 million in compensation to the company holding the concession for the Seremban-Port Dickson Highway for disallowing it to increase the toll on January 1 this year.

The minister said he had raised the issue of the toll rates to the Cabinet following complaints from road users that the toll rates are too higher.

Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Isa Samad had also requested the ministry to review the rate at the Seremban-Port Dickson highway.

Bernama reports: Project Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan Bhd (Plus) wants motorists to switch to smart-tag or the E-Payment System (EPS) to avoid stopping and delays at Toll Plazas.

Plus chief operating officer Mohd Hussein Ab Hamid said an equipment costing RM220 had to be installed on their wind screen and an infra-red light would automatically clear the way for them to pass through the toll gate.

The "touch and go" card, which should be bought separately and installed inside the car would show the amount being deducted for toll as the vehicle passed through, he added.

Some 60,000 motorists or 30 to 40 per cent of expressway users in the central region were using the equipment, a product of Austrian technology, but assembled locally, he told reporters after hosting a dinner for the mass media in Sg Petani last night.

The smart-tag facility was available at 15 toll plazas in the central region between Bukit Beruntung and Senawang.

Mohd Hussein said to encourage more motorists to switch to "smart tag",

Plus introduced the facility at five more toll plazas in the northern, central and southern regions on August 7.

The toll plazas are at Sungai Dua, Juru and Jelapang (northern region), Ipoh Selatan for the central region and Skudai in the southern region.

"Plus will study the rate of use of the smart tag at all toll plazas to determine if their use can be extended to all toll plazas," he said.

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